The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20160316215905/http://pleasantshadecemetery.org/index.html

WELCOME TO PLEASANT SHADE CEMETERY RESTORATION PROJECT

Sponsored by : East End Neighborhood Assn. of The Peninsula, Inc.
Director, Mrs. Artistine Lang

Mount Zion (1888) - Pleasant Shade (1908) - Holly Grove (1918)

Introduction

Picture

Pleasant Shade Cemetery, located at 520 Shell Road in Hampton Virginia, is the oldest, largest public African American cemetery on the Virginia Peninsula. Dating to 1888, it comprises 20 acres and is the final resting place for over 15,000 individuals. Among those interred here Evangelist Elder Soloman Lightfoot Michaux founder of

Church of God , Attorney James A. Fields, Lawyer J. Thomas Newsome and former Newport News Mayor Jessie M. Rattley.

Despite this illustrious background, the cemetery was abandoned by the former owners and has no perpetual care. In Short, Mother Nature had overtaken it. In addition to high grass, many of the markers are sunken or toppled. The site is regularly strewn with trash. There is no sign with the cemetery's name nor is there a register to indicate who is buried here.

In 2011, the East End Neighborhood Association, Inc. began organizing community cleanups. They, along with a bi-citizens group committed to restore dignity to Pleasant Shade cemetery through the following steps:

*The Association acquired 501(c)3 status in April 2012 to permit charitable contributions and corporate fund raising. The name was changed to the East End Neighborhood Association of the Peninsula, Inc. (E.E.N.A. of the Peninsula,Inc.)

*Periodic cleanups using volunteers and equipment purchased with donations for grass cutting, tree trimming, resetting of stones and other maintenance.

*Creation of landscaped entrance with permanent sign that identifies the cemetery.
*Collaboration with the City of Hampton for trash pickup.

*Documentation of who is buried in these sacred grounds; publication of that inventory online and in a book to be place in public libraries and schools.

*Installation of a state historical marker and nomination of the site to the National Register of Historic Places.

*Special events to restore community pride and respect for this hallowed ground.

Picture

Web Hosting by iPage

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20160316162120/http://pleasantshadecemetery.org/history.html

WELCOME TO PLEASANT SHADE CEMETERY RESTORATION PROJECT

Pleasant Shade Cemetery is located in Hampton, adjacent to Greenlawn Cemetery, the majority of which is in Newport News, but a portion of which is in Hampton. At one time they were under the same ownership, but several years ago a new owner bought just the Greenlawn Cemetery. Despite not owning it, the owner maintained Pleasant Shade for several years, but finally gave it up in 2010 due to the $30,000-$40,000 annual cost. It is now very overgrown. The owner of Pleasant Shade lives in Oklahoma and has been unresponsive to various individuals who have tried to contact him by phone or mail on various issues, including the tax assessor, as he is now $96,000 in arrears on his property taxes.

Greenlawn was listed in the National Register in 1999. Recently the City of Newport News planned to erect a local highway marker on it. A contingent connected with Pleasant Shade is demanding recognition for Pleasant Shade despite the fact that it is not in Newport News and Hampton does not have a local marker program or a preservation ordinance. Greenlawn started as a whites only cemetery, but integrated decades ago and is still an active cemetery; Pleasant Shade has only African American graves.

Pleasant Shade was the first public cemetery opened for African Americans in the early 20th century in the Hampton-Newport News area. Gravestones tend to be modest. Although there are some family groupings, these are not marked with curbing, fences, or walls, and most grave plots seem to have been bought as needed so families aren't necessarily next to each other. The gravestone for Elder Solomon Lightfoot Michaux and his wife Saint Mary Eliza Pauline Michaux is the most ornate in the cemetery, but is still fairly low-key. The cemetery reached capacity in the 2000's, hence doesn't make money, leading to the absentee owner's lack of interest in maintaining it.

Many people significant in Newport News' history are buried in Pleasant Shade, including:

1. Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux (1883-1968): Born in the Buckroe area of Hampton, raised in Newport News, and lived various places in Virginia and Washington, D.C. Entrepreneur who went on to greatly expand the Church of God; a pioneer in print, radio, television, and recorded evangelism; built two housing developments in D.C. area for lower and middle class African Americans, as well as soup kitchens; owned an amusement park for African Americans in Williamsburg; was a civil rights leader and advisor to three presidents.

2. Jessie Menifield Rattley (1929-2001): First African American elected to Newport News city council; first African American and first female mayor of Newport News; earlier had opened a business college, Peninsula Business College,

for African Americans to teach them business skills and etiquette, which was the first in Hampton Roads; involved or leader in several statewide and national educational and civic organizations; first African American female president of the Virginia Municipal League; first African American female of the National League of Cities; featured in Doris Funnye Innis, Juliana Wu, Joyce Duren's (1976) Profiles in Black: Biographical Sketches of 100 living Black unsung heroes. CORE Publications; only person in Newport News history to lie in state in City Hall.

3. Norvleate Downing-Gross (-1983): Moved to Newport News in 1931 and immediately started working to improve conditions for African Americans; was executive director of the Newport News Office of Human Affairs from its creation in 1964 to 1983; served on area committees to congressional delegations on housing, social services, aging, equal opportunity, minority relations, manpower, policing, and recreation.

4. Carrie J. Clark (or Clarke) Bolden (1869-1973 or 1884-1973): Graduated from the Hampton Training School for Nursing (later Dixie Hospital) in Hampton, and was one of the founders of Whittaker Memorial Hospital; was the school nurse for the African-American elementary schools in Newport News from 1916 to 1949; civic leader.

5. John Christopher Allen, Sr. (1876-1953): Leader in the local International Longshoreman's Association, including serving as financial secretary and manager of the headquarters in Newport News; chairman of the board of trustees of Whittaker Memorial Hospital and of Crown Savings Bank.

6. John Hoskins Ridley (1872-1943): Community leader who, with others, worked to get a secondary school for African Americans in Newport News, which was Huntington High School; one of the organizers of Crown Savings Bank in 1908 and later was a member of the board of directors after it merged with another bank.

7. Lavinia Marian Fleming Poe (1890-1974): Graduating from Howard University's law school in 1925, she became the first African American female attorney in the state of Virginia, practicing law in Newport News for almost 50 years.

8. Norris Berkeley Clark (1856-1940): Graduated from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1877, a classmate of Booker T. Washington; taught in local schools until he passed the bar and established a law practice in 1885, making him an early African American lawyer in the Hampton Roads area; first African American member of the Newport News school board; was principal of Colored School #2 (Booker T. Washington Elementary School) from 1902-1937.

9. Jacob A. Cooke (1870-1924), John O. Cooke (1871-?): W. Samuel Cooke (1876-1924): Owners of the Newport News Cooke Brothers Funeral Home, in Newport News, financed in 1891 by their father Henry, who had owned a livery and funeral home in Richmond since 1873; the business is still operating, managed by a great grandson of Henry Cooke.

10. Dr. William P. Dickerson (1870-1943): One of the founders of Whittaker Memorial Hospital; elected co-Vice President of the National Medical Association, an African American medical professionals organization, in 1937; board member of the Crown Savings Bank.

11. Burrean Bigger (1914-2005): Real estate developer who, starting in 1948, built affordable housing for African Americans in the Jefferson Park area of Newport News, saving costs by constructing them himself.

12. James Edward Hainesworth, Jr. (1945-2002): Actor who had speaking roles in Cotton Comes to Harlem, Shaft, and Day of the Jackal and appeared on a number of tv shows, including FBI Files, McCloud, The Prosecutors, and The New Detectives, as well as had a recurring role in Search for Tomorrow; member in and involved with the Screen Actors Guild, as well as a number of Hampton Roads theater organizations; Chairman of the Board for the Local Human Rights Commission.

13. Theodore "Pepper" R. Jones, Sr. (1937-1990): Bass singer with the Chateaus, The Platters, The Five Keys, and The New Centrics, and a backup singer to the Bobbettes.

May be others locally significant to Newport News and Hampton, if additional inventorying and research is done.

Some of these people were featured in an exhibit at the Newsome House in Newport News. An inventory has been started at www.FindaGrave.com

Web Hosting by iPage

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20160316162127/http://pleasantshadecemetery.org/contact--information.ht...

WELCOME TO PLEASANT SHADE CEMETERY RESTORATION PROJECT

ARTICLES OF INTEREST ARTICLES OF INTEREST ARTICLE OF INTEREST

CITY OF HAMPTON, VA.

We welcome your comments or suggestions regarding the Pleasant Shade Cemetery .

Name *

First Last

Email *

Comment *

SUBMIT

Thank you for your interest in the Pleasant Shade Cemetery Restoration Project.
All contributions are tax deductible. This is an awesome task, and we have a long way to go.

DONATIONS

Make checks payable to :
East End Neighborhood Assn. Of The Peninsula Inc.

Mail Donations to ;
East End Neighborhood Assn. Of The Peninsula Inc.
P.O.Box 9233
Hampton, Va. 23670-0233

Web Hosting by iPage